**CONFERENCE OF THE EIGHTEEN-NATION COMMITTEE ON DISARMAMENT**

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Statement by the President of the Republic of Chile
Presented on 29 November 1967 to the co-Chairmen of the
Conference of the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament

Statement by the President of Chile
31 October 1967

"In view of various publications regarding the situation of Latin American armament, the Government of Chile wishes to express its opinion as follows.

Chile neither supports nor sponsors disarmament of the Latin American countries.

Our armed forces are essential to the life of our countries: they safeguard our internal and external security, public order and national sovereignty, and must therefore maintain the level of efficiency necessary for the fulfilment of their important task.

To be drawn into an arms race is, however, quite a different matter.

Our present Government, like its predecessor, maintains that the acquisition of armaments must be restricted, for otherwise we might throw ourselves into a competition which would have the most serious political, economic and social consequences, since no country could refuse to compete without risking its own security.

It is inconceivable that we should make our chief aim the integration of our nations, and at the same time should initiate a policy of unlimited acquisition of armaments.

The situation would be even more unreasonable, for the weapons so acquired would have no other use than to defend each country against attack by the very neighbours who are seeking integration. However much the weapons cost, they could not be of the latest technological standards, nor of any use in a world war, over which moreover in these days our countries would have absolutely no control.

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On the other hand, an arms race imports an economic and social decision. It would be absolutely incompatible for our peoples to redouble their efforts at economic and social development in order to extirpate misery, raise education to a high level, build housing, improve health conditions, develop agriculture and industry and create employment, and simultaneously to pay the costs of an uncontrolled competition in armaments.

Furthermore, all the American Presidents assembled in Punta del Este unanimously and solemnly supported that attitude towards the acquisition of armaments. We think it necessary to reproduce their declaration:

'The Presidents of the Latin-American Republics, conscious of the importance of armed forces to the maintenance of security, recognize at the same time that the demands of economic development and social progress make it necessary to devote to those purposes the maximum resources available in Latin America.

'Therefore, they express their intention to limit military expenditures in proportion to the actual demands of national security in accordance with each country's constitutional provisions, avoiding those expenditures that are not indispensable for the performance of the specific duties of the armed forces and, where pertinent, of international commitments that obligate their respective governments.

'With regard to the Treaty on the Banning of Nuclear Arms in Latin America, they express the hope that it may enter into force as soon as possible, once the requirements established by the Treaty are fulfilled'.

This declaration was based precisely on the philosophy inspiring the Alliance for Progress. To act otherwise would destroy its fundamental meaning.

The Government of Chile, in making this statement, does not claim to judge nor to refer to resolutions adopted by any of the States in the exercise of their sovereignty. It makes no complaint or reproach against any nation of the hemisphere. Chile respects these nations and seeks and needs their friendship, for it is convinced that only inspiration and co-operation between our countries can open before us a wide road of progress, justice and social peace.

We are guided only by an earnest desire, subject to the actual situation and the need to maintain armed forces, to seek agreements which will enable us to put the Declaration of Punta del Este into practice and devote the bulk of our resources to the economic and social development which our people so urgently require.

We do not ourselves claim to convene a meeting to consider this problem. We merely wish to point out to all fraternal peoples and governments in Latin America that our Government is completely ready and willing to participate in any high-level meeting that may be convened or may be proposed by any country, for this purpose.

Failure to act immediately would court obvious dangers. It would mean a deep contradiction between the facts and the declarations, and would compel us to admit that none of the machinery intended to unite us and ensure peace had the least value."